

**PUBLIC HEARING RE GOVERNOR'S PROPOSED BUDGET
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE**

Kerri Dirgo
February 15, 2013

Hi, my name is Kerri Dirgo, and I'm a consumer of Bridgeport DMHAS: Young Adult Services. I'm here today to respectfully request that the Appropriations Committee support the increased funding for DMHAS YAS that was included in the Governor's proposed budget. I'd like to inform you of the countless ways YAS helped me just this past year.

I've been receiving subsidized housing for a year now and my home provides me with stability and safety. I've lived in shelters before, and been homeless numerous times. That environment doesn't contribute to recovery. Most of us just need a fighting chance and without funding for housing, those chances we need are slim to none. I'm living proof, as I'm doing better than I ever have in my life.

Less than a week ago, we had a major snowstorm, and while I was outside in pursuit of a shovel, I dropped my keys in the snow. I retraced my steps several times to find them...to no avail. My family resides in Hartford, and surrounding areas, and I don't know many people in my community. Consequently...I was locked out of my house, with nowhere to go, emergency workers were too busy with more severe issues to come to my aid. I called the appropriate staff member designated for on-call situations, and she came up with a solution: call a locksmith. It took him about 6 hours to reach me, but he eventually did and I was safe and sound. Without the proper funds to pay the locksmith...I would have been stranded outside all night in a blizzard.

Another tool YAS has to ensure that young adults reach, and maintain recovery is their social rehab program. As a young adult with a mental health diagnosis, it's sometimes difficult to connect with peers. The social Rehab program uses activities as a forum for Young adults to network, and find supports.

It also provides the opportunity to learn etiquette and social skills that are needed to succeed in life. The social rehab program has introduced me to peers who do positive things. I wouldn't be here today if it weren't for the social rehab program. Funding is also needed for this.

YAS has a Work Experience program that provides consumers with an opportunity to practice good work ethics. It teaches young adults that hard work pays off, and if we are to achieve anything, we must put effort and work into it. It's hard enough to find a job, and even harder with no experience or references.

We sign time sheets, and are paid for the work we do. Funding is needed to encourage good work habits.

In conclusion, I request that the appropriations committee support the governor's budget. Thank you for your time.